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## A Study of The Lack of Identity in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*

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### Abstract

In modern age, after the World Wars, the concept of “self” and “identity” were important. Most critics and writers of the era focused on this concept in their works. One of the authors of the modern age is Luigi Pirandello, whose works emphasized this concept. He believed that “self” and “identity” are concepts which are lost and unachievable in human beings. He emphasized that all human beings wear a “mask” which hides their identities. He traced the concept of “self” and “identity” in his plays and novels. As one can trace, he was familiar with psychology; moreover, one of the aspects of the psychology is to help man to achieve his “self” and “identity.” In the path of psychology, one of the prominent psychologists is Carl Gustav Jung and his theory of “archetypes.” As the process of “individuation” and “archetypes” show, every man can achieve his “self” and “identity” through these “archetypes.” Therefore, in this thesis the Jungian psychology is applied to the characters of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*, in order to explicate the lack of identity in these works.

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### 1. Introduction

The drama has always been the favor of human beings. One can even trace this point in the primitive people who annually worshipped their god or gods in a form of drama which was meant to ensure the renewal of life in the growth of crops leading to harvest. Therefore, drama came slowly out of these rites and developed side by side with the growth of civilization. The earliest reference to a performance dates back to Egypt, in the period 2000 or 3000 B.C. At first, the contents of the plays were about the actions of the god or gods, but by the time of Christianity and the birth of Christ it shifted to religious subjects such as the creation of man and Edenic life. In this way, man took refuge in drama in order to express his feelings, emotions and ideas.

Through the passage of time, drama developed and greater playwrights appeared. In ancient Greece, one can refer to Sophocles and Euripides, during the Renaissance one can refer to Shakespeare, during the seventeen

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century one can trace Richard Brinsley Sheridan and toward the modern era, Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Luigi Pirandello, Samuel Beckett and other dramatists are notable.

Drama has been used to express the feelings and ideas of the people and writers. Since literary terms, literary schools and different critical analyses have emerged, some of the dramatists or writers tended to one specific approach. For example, Henrik Ibsen is considered to be a realistic dramatist; his plays deal with social problems. Samuel Beckett's plays are absurdist ones, since they deal with man's hopelessness, his suffering and his isolation in the world. Luigi Pirandello's plays are considered to be psychological ones or in other way, we can say that they are psychodramatic plays; his plays are about the psychological problems of the characters. The characters in his plays, like *Henry IV*, are mad and they are under their dreams and fantasies; in fact, Luigi Pirandello's plays show the illusion and reality.

The term psychodrama was introduced by Jacob Levy Moreno. He believed that with drama people can solve their mental problems. In fact, psychodrama is a device to express the inner feelings. The psychiatrist asks his patient and other actors to act on the stage or any other place their roles. In this way, there is no pre-reading or pre-acting. The patient and actors improvise their dialogue. Therefore, the patient just speaks of his mental problems, his sufferings and inner feelings and the actors just re-act against him. In this case, the patient unconsciously solves his problem himself. Of course, the term psychodrama was mentioned by Jacob Levy Monero, but one can trace this subject even in the dramas of the past such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the way he tried to play the scene of his father's death, confirms this matter that even the dramatists of the past were aware of psychology which we achieve today.

Luigi Pirandello is considered as modern writers. Therefore, in his works, one can trace the prevalent problems or theories of their time. He was familiar with psychology and theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. My argument is focused on Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*, based on Jungian psychology in the following categories.

## 1.2. The Significance of the Study

Luigi Pirandello is considered as notable, avant-garde modern writers. Although, he is prominent as dramatists, he has some famous novels too. Here, the two plays of Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV* are going to be analyzed. He created a new way of presenting the characters in literature. The concept of self is important for Pirandello. The questions of "Who are we?" and "What is real?" (*Henry IV*: 143) which were stated in his drama, *Henry IV*, foreshadow his later novels and plays. In Pirandello's works, the difficulty of achieving a sense of identity, the impossibility of an authentic communication among the people, and the overlapping frontiers of appearance and reality are his characteristic themes. Moreover, his plays have plot within the plot that one cannot distinguish the boundary between the reality and illusion.

The question of identity which Pirandello speaks of, as reflecting the "pangs of my spirit," (Pirandello, Luigi. *Preface to Six Characters in Search of an Author*. P.xxii), in his preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, is discussed concerning the social and psychological points. He learned from Alfred Binet about the existence of the subconscious personality (a theme he shares with Marcel Proust and Sigmund Freud). Pirandello believes that the masks which people wear in the society are changed through the time, but the masks that the characters in his works wear are not changed, and if appearance is the only knowable reality then that reality is constantly changing. He mentions that masks, which are worn by each person, conceal the self from other. He believes that the self is hidden under the masks and the identity is a memory, or any life one can manage to lead so long as the social context will sustain. In his plays one can trace the theme of illusion and reality, sanity and insanity. Pirandello shows that the illusion is not harmful; rather, it is a heroic assertion of individual identity, a means of rebelling against society. According to him, there is no universal, fixed reality; there is only every person's individual perception of what is real. In *Henry IV*, the main character who has fallen from the horse and got mad, after the recovery pretended to be mad, because through this madness he can conceal his real identity, and real self from the others. Therefore, he can

do whatever he wants, as his mask changes by the passage of the time. Also, because he seemed mad to everyone, no one blamed him for murdering his rival.

Actually, self has been a topic of interest through the history of human beings. Unlike Pirandello's works, for instance, Beckett's characters are isolated from society and they do not communicate with people. In addition, Beckett's works do not have any plots. After the World Wars, modern and post-modern writers became interested in portraying the self. In fact, they wanted to find the existence of the man and his identity in the world. Therefore, the theories of Freud, Jung as psychologists, and other philosophers and sociologists contributed to this point. Pirandello was familiar with the theories of Freud and Jung. In this regard, in this research the Jungian psychoanalysis is applied in order to identify self and identity in the works Pirandello.

### 1.3. The Statement of the Problem

Luigi Pirandello can be categorized as psychoanalytic writers. His emphasize the unconscious mind, and examine the inner aspect of human nature. In his works, there is a search for self and identity. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and *Henry IV*, one can trace these psychological aspects, the lack of identity and self. All of the characters in these plays suffer mentally and attempt to achieve a sense of union. The main characters in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV* are narrators of the story who just narrate everything in the past; since narration is related to memory and unconscious, through which we feel that they suffer from something mentally. They are waiting for something and that is their real self and real identity.

### 1.3 Research Question

Since psychology deals with the inner aspect of human nature, and since it is something general for all human beings, the Jungian psychoanalysis can be one of the approaches apt for my argument. There is also one significant question that leads my research to its proper interpretation, and is going to be answered:

1- What does it mean by lack of identity in Pirandello's and Beckett's intended works?

## 2. Methodology and Approach

The psychoanalytic approach has been applied in this research among the other literary critical approaches. In order to explicate the inner lives and feelings of the characters in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV*, the Jungian psychoanalysis is used. In fact, through the archetypes which Jung states, the concept of lack of identity is going to be discussed. This study is based on library research. After studying and gathering the specific information and data, the relation of Jungian psychoanalysis to this research will be discussed.

## 3. Results and Discussion

As a result, in *Henry IV* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, one can see that all the characters are not able to achieve their selves and identities. As in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the characters are trying to find an author for themselves which implies that they try to establish an identity for themselves, since the author represents a kind of creator for them. All the characters have masks and hide their identities under their mask; they even do not have any names. Additionally, they cannot achieve their selves, since the producer as the wise old man was not able to give life and identity to them. Moreover, one can see that the father and the mother were not able to communicate with each other; this shows that they are not able to make a relationship with their anima and animus, which are another ways to achieve their selves.

In *Henry IV*, the aspect of identity is more complicated. As Jung declares, ego is the center of identity. Therefore, when someone uses a mask for himself and identifies himself with that mask, he will lose his identity. In *Henry IV*, one can see from the beginning that the character does not have any name. One can see him just as HenryIV, a name which he has chosen for himself from the time he fell from the horse. In this story, HenryIV uses different masks for himself; the mask of insanity and the mask of sanity. In fact, he hides his identity under his masks. For example, when he fell from the horse, he chose the mask of HenryIV; when he came to consciousness after twelve years, he decided to remain in his mask of insanity. Then, after revealing his sanity to others, by killing Belcredi he went to the mask of insanity once again. Besides that, the other characters of the story use masks too. Belcredi tries to show that he is a friend for HenryIV, while under his mask he was the person who kicked HenryIV's horse. Donna Matilda pretends that she wants to help HenryIV, but she was not able to do so. Also, she was not able to communicate with men too; therefore, she fails to accept her animus and achieve herself. The concept of wise old man here can be taken into account too. The doctor, who is the symbol of wise old man, fails to help HenryIV. Despite his knowledge he was not able to understand that HenryIV is not mad. Additionally, he was to put HenryIV into real madness through the condition which he established. Consequently, one can assume that the characters of the stories do not achieve to their selves and their identities are not clear.

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